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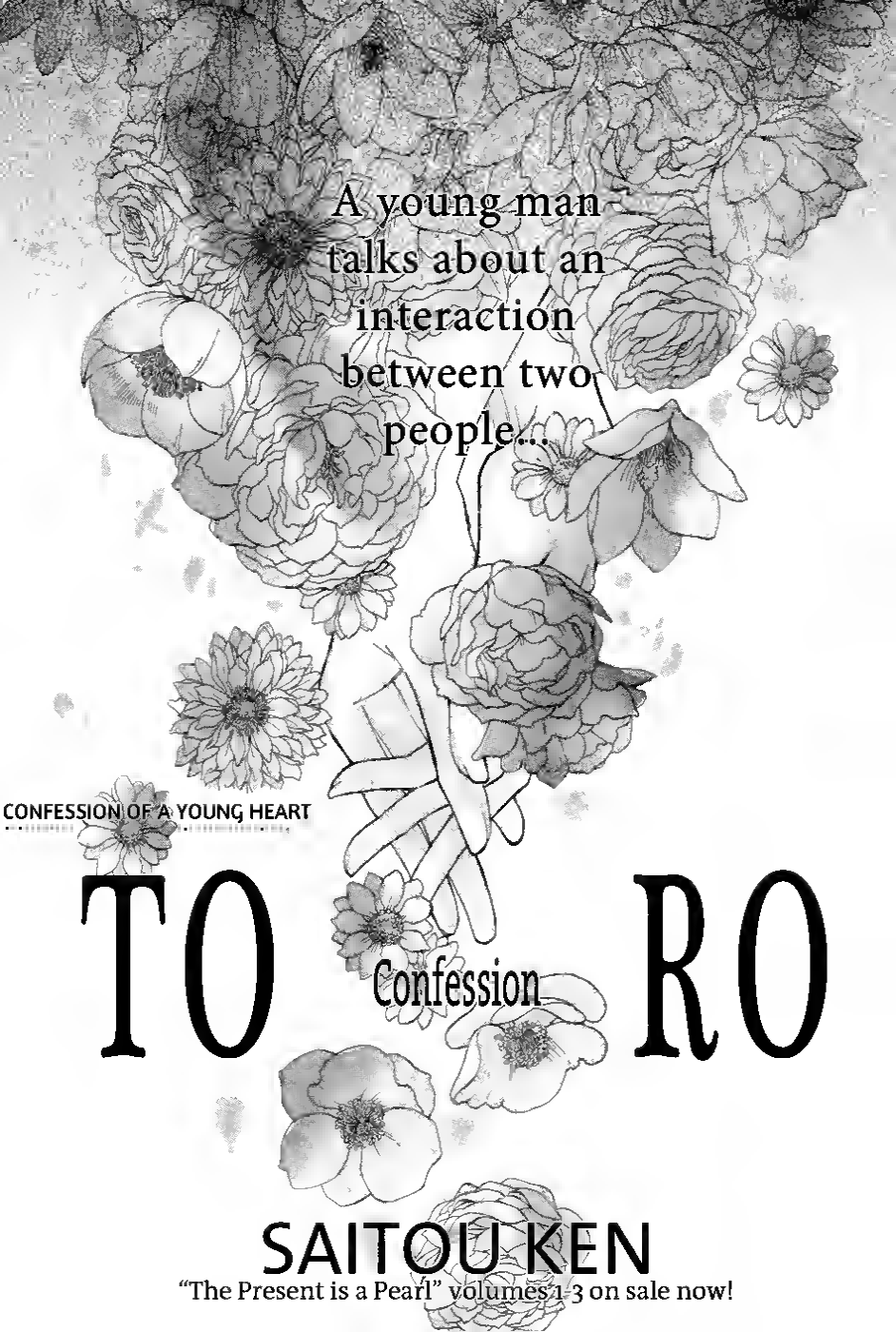
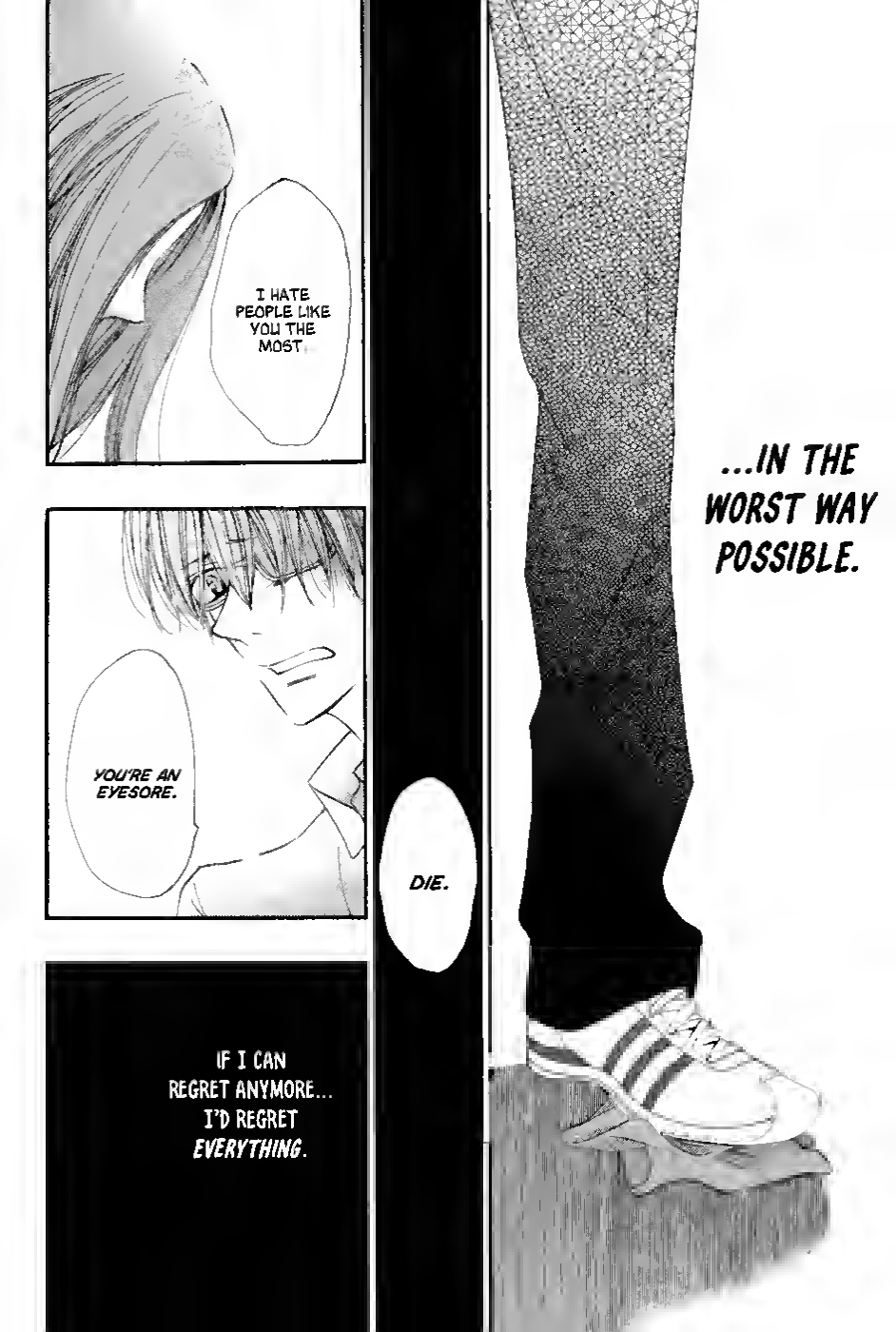
I LIKE YOU.


A young man talks about an interaction between two people...
CONFESSION OF A YOUNG HEART
TO RO
Confession
SAITOU KEN
"The Present is a Pearl" volumes 1-3 on sale now!

THEN I WOULDN'T HAVE TO STEP ON YOUR FEELINGS...


I HATE PEOPLE LIKE YOU THE MOST.
YOU'RE AN EYESORE.
DIE.
IF I CAN REGRET ANYMORE... I'D REGRET EVERYTHING.
...IN THE WORST WAY POSSIBLE.

Theme
What is Youth?

A girl and boy riding a bike along the coast side

is YOUTH.

Saitou Ken

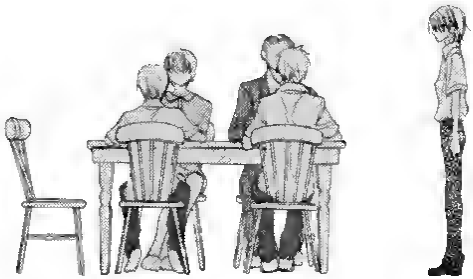
I WAS NOT A GOOD CHILD BY ANY STRETCH OF THE IMAGINATION.

SOMEONE MY SIBLINGS AND FRIENDS WOULDN'T LOOK DOWN ON.

TO BE A PERSON THAT MY PARENTS COULD BE PROUD OF,

I'D DO MY BEST TO BE LIKE THE EXCELLENT PEOPLE AROUND ME,

I TRIED TO NOT BECOME MYSELF.



THE FIRST TIME I MET YOU

WAS AT THE ENTRANCE EXAMS FOR A PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOL.

AS I HEARD THE BELLS SIGNALING THE BEGINNING OF EXAMS,

I'M NOT SURE WHY I CRIED SO MUCH,

I LAID ON THE ROOFTOP AND CRIED MY EYES OUT.

BUT I MUST'VE PUT MYSELF THROUGH TOO MUCH STRESS.

—THEN I REALIZED...

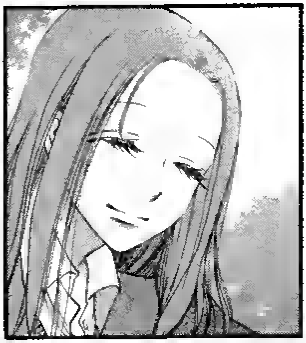
YOU WERE IN MY BLURRY VISION,
QUIETLY WIPING MY FACE.
I WAS TAKEN BACK IMMEDIATELY BY THE PROCTOR,
BUT MY RESULTS WERE HORRIBLE.
IN THE END, THE EXCELLENT PEOPLE AROUND ME PITIED MY LOSS,
AND I ENDED UP IN A SCHOOL THEY ALL LOOKED DOWN ON.
I WAS SURPRISED TO FIND YOU IN THE SAME SCHOOL.
YOU DIDN'T LET THE LOSS TAKE THE BEST OF YOU,
AND YOU BLENDED IN WITH THE REST OF YOUR CLASS

THAT TIME I GOT PUNCHED FOR NO GOOD REASON, YOU QUIETLY WIPED MY FACE.
STILL, YOU WATCHED OVER ME
I ALREADY GAVE UP ON SCHOOL LIFE,
AND I STOOD OUT LIKE A SORE THUMB

YOU NEVER ANSWERED BACK.

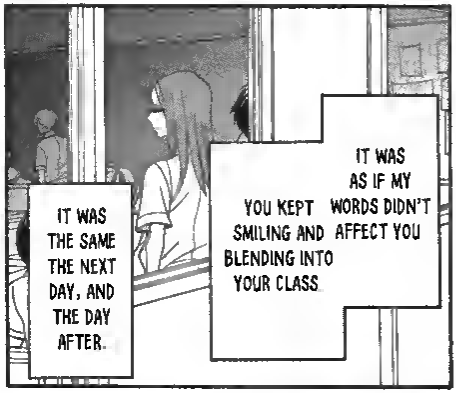
YOU WERE NICE TO EVERYONE. YOU WERE LOVED BACK. I WAS THE COMPLETE OPPOSITE OF YOU.

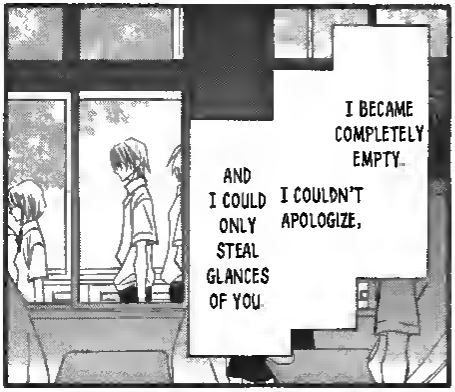
THAT'S WHY I THOUGHT LONG AND HARD WITH MY STUPID HEAD.

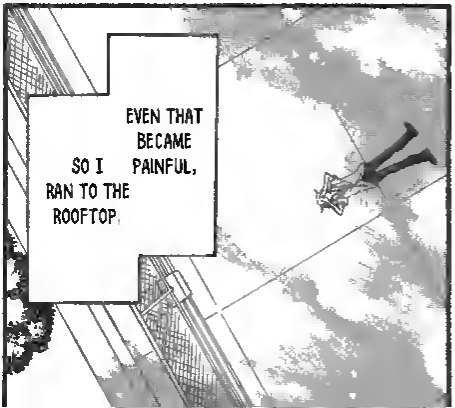


I ASKED YOU MANY TIMES...

YOU'RE PITYING ME, RIGHT?
YOU ALMOST SAID SOMETHING.
BUT YOU STOPPED,
AND SMILED LIKE ALWAYS.
IT WAS AS IF...
YOU WERE CONFIRMING MY SUSPICIONS.


IT WAS THE SAME THE NEXT DAY, AND THE DAY AFTER.
YOU KEPT SMILING AND BLENDING INTO YOUR CLASS.
IT WAS AS IF MY WORDS DIDN'T AFFECT YOU




I PUSHED YOU AWAY IN THE WORST WAY IMAGINABLE.

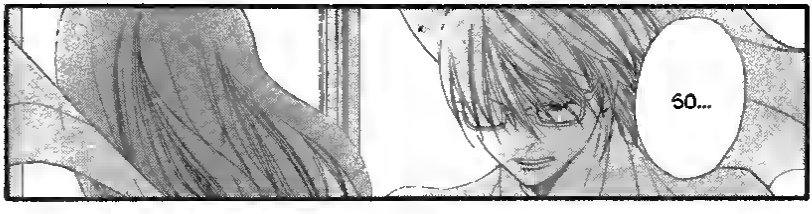
I WANTED YOU TO SAY I WAS WRONG.
I WAS HOPING THAT YOUR KINDNESS WASN'T BECAUSE YOU WERE PITYING ME.
EVER SINCE WE MET ON THAT ROOFTOP
I...
...
...NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT...
WHAT WAS YOUR EXPRESSION THAT DAY?
MAYBE I'M MISSING SOMETHING EXTREMELY SIMPLE.
WHY WERE YOU ON THE ROOFTOP THAT DAY?

MAYBE YOU HAD
THE SAME FEELINGS AS ME
THAT DAY.
SHE HID BEHIND A SMILE,
AND FORCED HERSELF TO ACT LIKE SOMEONE SHE WASN'T, JUST LIKE ME.
MAYBE SHE CAME TO CRY,
AND SAW ME IN A MESS.
I WANTED TO ASK YOU SO BADLY...
WHY YOU WERE ON THE ROOFTOP THAT DAY.
BUT...
THINKING ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF I WERE WRONG...
MAKES ME SHY AWAY.

WAS THE MOST COURAGE YOU COULD MUSTER...
AND YOUR ANSWERLESS AFFECTION
THOSE FEELINGS WERE ALSO THE SAME FOR YOU...
BUT IF...

OF COURSE,
THIS MIGHT BE MY IMAGINATION..
FROM THE BEGINNING
TO THE END..
IT MIGHT BE
MY SELFISH WISH.
I'M SO EMBAR-RASSED.
I WISH THE GROUND COULD SWALLOW ME UP..

AND THE COURAGE TO TELL YOU
STILL,
EVEN IF THIS BITTERNESS
ARE ALL WRONG...
I HAVE
NO REGRETS
FOR THE PERSON STANDING IN FRONT OF ME.



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